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SOME MANUSCRIPTS RELATING TO SOUTH
AFRICAN BOTANY IN THE WILLIAM
SHERARD COLLECTION IN THE
BODLEIAN LIBRARY AT OXFORD

P. EDWARDS

(*Department of Botany, British Museum, London*)

The first record of a South African plant was an illustration of *Protea neriifolia* in the *Exoticorum Libri Decem*, 1605 of Clusius. Justus Heurnius (1587–1651 or 2) made the first collection of plants from the Cape of Good Hope. He also made some drawings, which he sent to his brother Otto, a Professor in Leyden. These were the originals for five plates in Johannes Bodaeus Stapelius' *Theophrastii eresii de historia plantarum*, which was published in 1644. It was, however, Paul Hermann (1646–1695) who made the first important collection of plants.

Hermann, who was born in Halle, Saxony, took his medical degree in Padua. Arnoldus Seyn, Professor of Botany at Leyden, recommended him to Rhee de tot Drakenstein, at that time Governor of the Dutch possessions in Malabar, as a botanist capable of investigating the flora of Ceylon. Hermann would appear to have collected at the Cape on his outward journey to Ceylon in 1672. James Petiver (c. 1663–1718), a wealthy London apothecary, bought, for Sir Hans Sloane, a collection of Hermann's Cape plants at the sale of Hermann's herbarium in 1711. These form Vol. 75 of the Sloane Herbarium which is in the British Museum (Natural History). Some of these plants were

described and illustrated in Hermann's *Paradisus Batavus* which was published from his MS. by William Sherard in 1698.

Among the Sherard MSS. at Oxford is a draft of part of the *Paradisus* (MS. 181) and drawings of plants by Hermann intended to illustrate the *Catalogus plantarum* at the end of this work (MS. 178). MS. 179 is entitled 'Hermann's journal in Dutch of a botanical expedition from the Cape of Good Hope, Aug. 1685-Jan. 1686'. This is in fact a copy, made by Hermann, of what is considered by Waterhouse to be the official account of Simon van de Stel's (1639-1712) journey to Amacqualand (Namaqualand) 1685-1686. The original MS. belonged to Fagel (1765-1838) whose collection was acquired by Trinity College, Dublin, in 1802. Waterhouse published this Fagel MS., with a translation and notes, in 1932. The Hermann transcript appears to be identical with it, though it lacks copies of the 71 drawings of animals and plants that had been made by Hendrik Claudius. There are many blank pages, which correspond to the position of the drawings in the Fagel MS. Hermann was obviously acquainted with the Fagel family as another MS. (184), a notebook, contains a heading 'Hortus Fagelianus'.

Somewhat before 1680 Hermann returned to Holland to take up his appointment as Professor of Botany at Leyden. This appointment included responsibility for the Leyden botanic garden. Boerhaave (1668-1738), who succeeded Paul Hermann, stated that although he was in charge of the garden for only a few years he did more to improve it in that time than his predecessors had done in a hundred and five years. It was while Hermann was in Leyden that William Sherard spent a considerable time with him learning from him and later helping him to identify his Cape collection.

There were many famous gardens in Holland at this time. The second half of William Sherard's *Scola botanica*, 1689, bears the sub-title, *Paradisi Batavi prodromus* and is a list of some 1,000 plants arranged alphabetically, which were growing in Dutch gardens at that time. This list was no doubt made with the aid of Hermann's MS. notes on exotics recently introduced into Holland. A number of Cape plants were among those that had been acclimatised in Dutch gardens at this time. Hermann and Sherard therefore had some living material to aid their studies of the Cape flora.

It was also customary to employ an artist to draw some of these new introductions as they flowered. Boerhaave in 1727 (letter in Sherard MS. 174) bought such a collection for Sherard from Levinus Vincent (1658-1727). Vincent was an Amsterdam merchant who acquired through marriage the famous museum of Anthonie van Breda. These drawings (MS. 188), entitled 'Herbarium Capense', are signed A. B. del and were no doubt drawn by van Breda who was known to be a fine artist. He was either recording the plants growing in his own garden or in those of his friends.

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